Will it Entice or Alienate the Consumer?

As I reflect back on 2006 one thought reoccurs in my mind &#151 if ever there was a year to be involved with the wireless industry in some way, it was this year. We saw many emerging technologies become a reality and new consumer-driven applications were in abundance. Developments in WiMAX, RFID and Security and ID technologies lead the way resulting in products that gave us greater mobility, security and reliability. Mobile applications, in particular, grew exponentially. And they continue to peak everyone’s interest both from an enterprise and consumer point of view.

At the forefront is SMS or short message service, otherwise known as “text” or &quottext messaging&quot. According to CTIA, there has been a 150% increase in traffic within the last year. Additional mobile applications that have caught on include Premium SMS (PSMS); Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) and Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS).

Recently I read about a relatively new mobile application that definitely caught my attention, not only because of its possibilities, but also because of the tremendous impact (positive or negative) it could have on this industry. I am referring to &quotMobile Interactive Marketing&quot or &quotMobile Advertising&quot. The Mobile Marketing Association (MMA) defines mobile marketing as &quotthe use of wireless media as an integrated content delivery and direct response vehicle within a cross-media marketing communications platform.&quot Mobile allows a company to target potential buyers with anytime, anywhere marketing. With wireless penetration of 70% or more in most major metropolitan areas, wireless devices have become an excellent communications tool for marketers to capitalize on.

Mobile Marketing has already gotten the attention of many major corporations as a new revenue source. Although many are ready to launch into major mobile marketing campaigns, some have learned that it is not as easy as it sounds. Like anything else in the early stages of development, it has its problems. If, for example, the technology being used is inadequate, and response times by the advertiser to the consumer are too slow, the immediate opportunity to connect may be lost.

The other unknown factor is determining how the average consumer will respond to receiving unsolicited marketing messages on their mobile device at home, at work, in the car etc. Will they consider mobile advertising an intrusion?

Mobile marketing has tremendous potential for enterprise, could bode well for the wireless industry and offers advantages to the consumer. However, in order for it to succeed, the recipient must be able to choose when they want to receive messages and have the option of accepting or rejecting messages, depending on their level of interest.

The MMA has established a Consumer Best Practices (CBP) which outlines the guidelines around mobile messaging, designed to protect the consumer's experience and privacy. If this system is enforced and works, the potential is there for mobile marketing to succeed, if it doesn't, I'm afraid it may do no more than alienate the consumer. Nonetheless, it will be interesting to watch its progression.

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